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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -NIDA EMMONS
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage August 4-6 on next year's legislators' and presidential elections, on Taiwan's UN bid, on the joint efforts by Taiwan and the United States in successfully capturing five illegal Chinese immigrants at the Los Angeles International Airport Saturday; and on the raid of an illegal local cosmetics company disguised as an Australian firm. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a banner headline on page four August 6 which said "Deputy Defense Minister Ko Cheng-heng to Visit the United States to Pave the Way for the [Planned Purchase of] Aegis-class Destroyers."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, said the United States' recent moves in bowing blindly to communist China and suppressing democratic Taiwan have aroused certain anti-U.S. sentiments in Taiwan. An editorial in the pro-independence English-language "Taipei Times" also criticized Washington's different treatments to Beijing and to Taipei. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" chimed in by urging the United States to cherish Taiwan's democracy. An editorial in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the subtle changes in the triangular relationship among Taipei, Washington and Beijing recently and said such changes have put both Washington and Beijing in a dilemma. A "Taipei Times" op-ed, written by former AIT Chairman Nat Bellocchi, urged Washington to establish constructive dialogue mechanism with Taiwan. End summary.

A) "The United States' Taiwan Policy Needs to Conform to Common Sense and Common Principles"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (8/6):

"... Since [President Chen Shui-bian's] transit in the United States en route to Central and South America is not totally necessary, the question regarding whether he should transit the continental U.S. is a matter that carries more symbolic than substantive significance. Indeed, transiting the continental U.S., particularly those big cities like New York or Los Angeles, may lead to some beneficial results such as the non-official meetings with passionate overseas Taiwanese, but still, there are evident restrictions to such activities. More importantly, if those bureaucrats in the U.S. State Department insist on making a matter out of this routine practice and turning it into a tool to vent its complaints about the policy of Taiwan's elected president, our nation will weigh on it as well and will not yield [to the United States] blindly. As it stands now, the abolition of the National Unification Council and the National Unification Guidelines in early 2006 as well as the plan to hold a UN referendum this year are all what an elected president must reasonably do to comply with the mainstream public opinion; they also indicated democratic Taiwan's sincerity in telling the international community that it is willing to handle

peacefully its normal relations with communist China and to participate in the international organizations.

"The United States, which proactively advocates democracy and practices it as a universal value, should reasonably support Taiwan's daring and resolute actions in practicing democracy and joining the international community. It is a pity that the U.S. executive branch has often been inconsistent in its words and deeds when it comes to treating democratic Taiwan over the past few years: From President Bill Clinton to President George W. Bush, from Secretary Colin Powell to Condoleezza Rice, what one often saw was

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that when they praised Taiwan as a successful story of democracy, they were also restricted by the diplomatic needs of communist China. Washington has constantly cited reasons such as the one China policy or [possible] alteration to the cross-Strait status quo to suppress [Taiwan's] procedures in concretely practicing basic democratic principles, such as the referenda. Such inconsistency in [the United States'] words and deeds have aroused some anti-U.S. sentiments. ... This anti-U.S. consciousness that appeared lately is an aversion stemming from the United States' blind bowing to communist China and suppressing democratic Taiwan. ..."

B) "Carrots for China, Sticks for Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/4):

"It's a perfect juxtaposition: In the same week that Mattel pulled more than 1.5 million units of toys off the shelves, the US has offered would-be superpower China technical advice on how to export untainted food and drugs. Despite years of exponential growth, poor Beijing is apparently still struggling with the concept of export quality. ... Even so, the strength of the yuan and flagrant, unpunished intellectual copyright violations are putting pressure on members of Congress to demand retaliatory measures. With the Bush administration in general, and the US State Department in particular, however, it's nothing doing: Diplomacy is all. The offer of technical assistance is sensible: Americans and their companies have a lot at stake when China neglects responsibilities on health and safety.

"And yet it is striking how the US consistently prefers encouragement and dialogue over criticism and punitive measures when it comes to the flagrant disregard for basic standards in China, standards that the industrialized world takes for granted. If only Taiwan consistently enjoyed such treatment from Washington. When President Chen Shui-bian about to embark on another Central American diplomatic tour, there are rumblings over whether the US State Department is going to punish him for supporting a referendum on Taiwan's entry into the UN. No punitive restrictions have been announced, although the pro-unification China Times - a frequently unreliable and mischievous source on US matters - claims that this is on the way. If the State Department were to do so, it would be a most unfortunate reflection of a monolithic view on Taiwanese affairs and Taiwanese people. It would also be a sad coda to the bridge-building trip to the US by Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presidential nominee Frank Hsieh, who seems to have gone out of his way to play ball with US officials all too easily unnerved by an 'angry' China.

"It is understandable, though not defensible, that the State Department would want to muzzle Chen, Even if what he says about Taiwan and the UN is perfectly true. It is not understandable that the State Department would so pettily use stopover rights as punishment if Chen does not do its bidding. There are other ways to place pressure on leaders. One is to treat ordinary Taiwanese with a greater degree of respect. An example of this would be to grant visa waivers for entry to the US to Taiwanese nationals, which a new law awaiting the signature of US resident George W. bush would allow. This kind of bottom-up pressure is not achieved, however, by giving a head of state a smackdown for all to see. At some point, if is wants to see results, the US government will need to speak to ordinary Taiwanese in a manner more eloquent and constructive than this. "

C) "U.S. Should Cherish Taiwan Democracy"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (8/6):

"... In our view, the adoption of any such measures to 'retaliate' against either Taiwan's application to join the U.N. or against the proposed bottom-up referendum campaigns on affiliating with the U.N. would gravely sully the U.S.' cultivated image of the world's model democracy. ... In his March 28 rejection of Taiwan's depositing of its accession to the U.S.'s own Convention Against All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moom shamefully endorsed Beijing's drive to unilaterally change Taiwan's status by wrongfully declaring that "the U.N. considers Taiwan for all purposes to be an integral party of the People's Republic of China.

"Moreover, in his rejection of President Chen's application for Taiwan's U.N. membership, Ban grossly misinterpreted U.N. General Assembly Resolution 2758 of October 25, 1971 as the basis for his claim, even though the resolution only granted the U.N. seats for 'China' to the PRC, but did not resolve or even mention the issue of Taiwan. Regretfully, Bush has failed to openly take the U.N. secretary-general to account for Ban's endorsement of Beijing's

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attempt to annex Taiwan and may thus be betraying his own stated ideals of "promoting democracy around the world. ...

"The drive for Taiwan to join the U.N. as an equal and contributing member was also not manufactured by Chen, but was advocated by Taiwan democratic movement pioneers in the late 1970s and has long been promoted from the bottom up by a wide range of social forces, not just the DPP. Indeed, the fact that the KMT itself has launched a bottom-up referendum campaign for U.N. 're-entry' confirms the depth of public feeling on this issue. ... President Chen has a constitutional and legal right to call a 'defensive referendum' if faced with a direct challenge to our national sovereignty to give the Taiwan people a chance to express their voices. As it is difficult to predict how such a decision would affect U.S.-Taiwan relations we urge Washington, together with other democratic powers, to cherish Taiwan's democracy and prevent the formation of a direct threat to our sovereignty by the authoritarian PRC."

D) "Predicament and Dilemma in the Triangular Relationship among Taipei, Washington and Beijing"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/5):

"The triangular relationship among Taipei, Washington and Beijing has been in the process of subtle interactions over the past few years. On the one hand, Washington and Beijing have attempted to box the triangular relationship in a certain 'status quo' by constantly announcing their positions. On the other hand, however, the DPP in Taipei has been constantly trying and testing in an attempt to push the envelop of the 'status quo.' ... But the evolvement of certain situations lately has made the situation more complicated, and it is difficult to predict how the situation will evolve in the next stage. ...

"First, differences have unusually occurred in the strategies of the Green leadership elites in carrying out their goals. ... As a rule, after Frank Hsieh has formally become [the DPP] presidential candidate, all the party operations should run with Hsieh as the center. But what happened in reality was that each authority agency is working its own way like a carriage drawn by many horses running in different directions. For example, a minute ago Hsieh was telling Washington that he will not push for a UN referendum [sic], the next minute President Chen wrote a letter to the UN Secretariat expressing Taiwan's position on 'applying for the UN membership under the name Taiwan.' The party machine led by You Shyi-kun then submitted a 'Normal Country Resolution,' which was directly aiming at Hsieh's 'constitutional one China' doctrine. ...

"The second change in situation was that the Blue camp obviously no longer wanted to play the role of a firewall in the triangular relationship among Taipei, Washington and Beijing. Unlike what happened in 2004, leadership elites in the Blue camp, starting from

Ma Ying-jeou, did not criticize the Green camp for its moves pushing for the UN referendum; instead, they followed suit and announced that they will launch a referendum on rejoining the UN. To avoid pressure from Washington, Ma Ying-jeou even plans not to go to the United States! ...

"Such new changes have put Washington and Beijing in a dilemma. Washington's predicament is that none of its powerful moves, be it an elaboration on its position, postponement in the arms deals, or even lowering its treatment for [Taiwan] leaders transiting the U.S., seems to be able to punish Chen Shui-bian, but it may very likely directly impact the campaigning of Hsieh. This is a result that Washington will not be happy to see. ..."

E) "Better Dialogue in the Triumvirate"

Nat Bellocchi, former chairman of AIT and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/6):

"... There are numerous reasons why constrictive dialogue between Taipei and Washington has suffered in recent years. The US has made commitments to both Taiwan and China. Changing those commitments would be difficult. For one thing, Beijing has refused to accept any real dialogue with Taiwan unless the latter surrenders. And Taiwan especially since it became a democracy - seeks high-level, open dialogue so that it can fully represent its people. ... The US must find the political will to become more involved and should try to find ways by which it can more efficiently discuss developments in the Strait with its Taiwanese counterparts.

"Taipei and Washington must hold frequent bilateral talks -- not through single envoys or from time to time, but rather on a regular basis. Both should bolster their representative offices to provide policymakers back home better information upon which to develop their policies. The present system of US-Taiwan relations began some 27 years ago. Back then, the two enjoyed close relations. When, years later, Taiwan turned into a democracy, the expectations were that the relationship would only become even closer. A quick glance at TV and newspapers in Taiwan suffices to demonstrate how things have changed. ...

"At the same time, US interests have changed, as it faces a different set of problems. Despite its preference for a peaceful resolution in the cross-strait conflict, the truth of the matter is that relations between Taipei and Beijing have deteriorated. Given this reality and without a change in policy, the US could soon be seen to be complicit in Beijing's suppression of Taiwanese democracy. ... It took the missile crisis of 1996 to prompt change in the military relationship. Military-to-military communication between Taiwan and the US has continued to grow, but for political reasons the quality of diplomatic channels has deteriorated.

"In all, from now until 2009 and given everything that will happen in between, we can expect the US-Taiwan relationship to be a highly complex one. As such, failure by these two countries to establish constructive dialogue mechanisms could give rise to serious problems. Before crisis hits, routine meetings at the governmental level -- or, if needed, between officials who have taken temporary leave of their official positions in office -- should be held so that concerns and opportunities can be thoroughly discussed. Doing so is in the US' interest, Taiwan's interest - and even in China's interest. What is not in the US's interest is to continue to allow Beijing to determine the nature of the US-Taiwan relationship."

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